



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Southern Nevada Healthcare System

Media Release

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VASNHS Expanding Virtual Care in Response to COVID-19

NORTH LAS VEGAS, Nev. – In response to COVID-19, VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) is making it easier and safer for Veterans to access services from home. As such, VASNHS is moving as many in-person primary care behavioral health appointments to virtual care as possible.

“Due to COVID-19 precautionary measures and out of concern for our Veterans, we are honoring current social isolation and distancing guidelines,” said Dr. Maia D. Carter, VASNHS chief of Primary Care. “With virtual care, we are able to leverage available technology to make sure that our patients and staff are safe. We want to be able to connect with our Veterans, educate them, particularly about COVID-19, and make sure we get them what they need during this period of time.”

Virtual care allows Veterans to contact their VA health care team through secure messaging or to receive in-home treatment via telephone or video.

“This is a time where we can take major advantage of the technology,” Carter said. “When I have patients who are new to virtual care, I work through the process with them. When we connect, I review a Veteran’s medical record with them, discuss their concerns as well as review studies, test results, and medications to get them what they need. Gradually, most Veterans become comfortable with the technology and many prefer virtual care.”

One area that has greatly increased its use of virtual care is behavioral health. VASNHS is expanding its options to allow for all mental health services to be available virtually. “If you’re in psychotherapy, or you’ve been seeing your mental health provider for even a little while, you’re ready to rock with it,” said Tim Jobin, VASNHS’ chief of Behavioral Health. “If you have a smartphone, you’re ready to go. If you have high-speed internet and a laptop, you’re ready to go. I would say, in my opinion, 99 percent of people are in

a good place to do this.”

Last year, Veterans had over 20 million virtual engagements with VA. With increased concern regarding illnesses such as COVID-19, VASNHS is encouraging more Veterans to take advantage of virtual care. Options include [Telehealth \[telehealth.va.gov\]](https://telehealth.va.gov), [MyHealtheVet Secure Messaging \[myhealth.va.gov\]](https://myhealth.va.gov) and care in the home via [VA Video Connect \[mobile.va.gov\]](https://mobile.va.gov).

VASNHS is also encouraging Veterans who have not accessed care with the VA to enroll virtually at www.va.gov, or call the Health Eligibility Center at 877-222-8387. If a Veteran is currently enrolled at another VA location and would like to transfer to the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System, they can call the enrollment office at 702-791-9071. Due to COVID-19, in-person visits are being limited for the time being.

Finally, to avoid confusion regarding cancellations of upcoming face-to-face appointments, VASNHS is discontinuing automated appointment reminder telephone calls and post cards. VASNHS staff are also reaching out to Veterans to talk to them about available options for their scheduled appointments. To check on future scheduled appointments or to cancel an appointment, Veterans can call VASNHS’ automated telephone system at 702-791-9000, press 2, then press 1.

For general VA-related questions regarding COVID-19, Veterans should visit: <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/>.

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Media: For queries or more information, please email vhalaspao@va.gov or call VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Public Affairs at (702) 791-9000 extensions. 19003, 19004 or 14436.